

St. Patrick's Catholic Church
On the old road from Newcastle to
Damariscotta Mills, off State Route 215
Damariscotta Mills
Lincoln County
Maine

HABS No. ME-84

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

ST. PATRICK'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Address: On the old road from Newcastle to Damariscotta Mills, off State Route 215, Damariscotta Mills, Lincoln County, Maine.

Present Owner and Occupant: St. Patrick's Catholic Church

Present Use: Church

Brief Statement of Significance: This small, brick church, dedicated in 1808, is the oldest Catholic church still standing in New England.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: St. Patrick's Church.
2. Date of erection: Foundation laid 1807; completed 1808; blessed July 17, 1808 by Rev. Jean Louis LeFebvre de Cheverus.
3. Architect: Nicholas Codd.
4. Notes on alterations and additions:
 - 1818 Revere bell acquired 1818.
 - 1866 Brick tower with hipped roof built for the bell.
 - 1892 Spire with wooden cross added to 1866 tower.
 - 1896 Stained glass windows added; benches replaced by pews; plain white ceiling decorated.
 - 1948 Floor tile laid in vestibule, aisle, in front of the communion rail; hot air heating installed; new linoleum in choir loft.
 - 1949 New decorative furnishings; new landscaping.
 - 1950 Church insulated.
 - 1951 Aluminum storm windows added.
 - 1952 New brick steps--replaced concrete which had replaced original fieldstone.
 - 1954-55 New driveways.
 - 1957 Repairs to the steeple, brick repointed, trim painted.
 - 1958 Timbers and floor renewed; wall to wall carpeting; new electric lighting.

5. Sources of information: David Quimby, The History of Ancient Sheepscot and Newcastle (Bath, Maine: E. Upton and Sons, 1882), p. 295.

Federal Writers' Project, Maine, A Guide "Down East" (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937), p. 220

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St. Patrick's Church, Newcastle, Maine, Sesquicentennial, 1808-1958
(Damariscotta, Maine: The News Print Shop, [1958]). Copy at the
Skidompha Free Library, Damariscotta, Maine.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: This is the second oldest Roman Catholic church constructed in New England, and the oldest still standing. The first was the Franklin Street Church, Franklin and Devonshire Streets, Boston, built in 1803, Charles Bulfinch, architect, since demolished.

St. Patrick's was built mainly for Irish Catholic settlers in the Damariscotta area who came from Boston, notably James Kavanagh and Matthew Cottrill. Kavanagh and Cottrill immigrated to Boston from County Wexford, Ireland c. 1781, and moved to Damariscotta c. 1793 where they formed a very prosperous partnership in trade.

When a small chapel built in 1798 became inadequate, St. Patrick's was built. It was dedicated by Rev. Jean Louis LeFebvre de Cheverus, one of two priests who ministered to the Catholics in New England and did missionary work among the Indians. After many years in New England, Cheverus returned to his native France in 1823. There he was made Bishop of Montanban, later Archbishop of Bordeaux, and a year before his death in 1836 was named a Cardinal.

Soon after the church was built, the population centers along the Maine Coast developed elsewhere and Damariscotta Mills remained only a small settlement. As a result, St. Patrick's remained only as a mission for over a century, and it was 1931 before a resident parish priest came to Damariscotta Mills.

C. Supplemental Material: The following letter from Rev. Cheverus to Bishop Carroll in Baltimore is quoted in St. Patrick's Church, Newcastle, Maine, Sesquicentennial 1808-1958 (Damariscotta, Maine: The News Print Shop, [1958]); it is also reproduced in Shea, Life and Times of Bishop Carroll, pp. 613-616:

July, 1808

"Dr. Matignon having authorized me in your name to bless the newly constructed church here, and the cemetery adjoining it, I performed the ceremony on Sunday the 17th of this month. The Church is called St. Patrick's--the name seemed to gratify our friends here; I like it myself because it proclaimed that our church here is the work of Irish piety. The church is of brick 80 ft. in length and 25 ft. in breadth. The greatest height inside is 30 ft., five arched windows 15 ft. high on each side. There is a small gallery over the door with a semi-circular window. It is on the whole a very neat and elegant chapel.

"The expense will be about 3000 dollars, out of which I am afraid our generous friends, Messrs. Kavanagh and Cottrill will be obliged to pay 2000. They have given 3 acres of land, on part of which are the church and cemetery. There will be room enough for a house and garden and orchard for a Priest...." HABS ME 8-DANARM 3-

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
August 1962.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: Reputed to be designed by Nicholas Codd, built of native brick, limestone mortar made from stone imported from Ireland; crypt-type altar of wood.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: 25'-11" x 79'-7". One story; rectangular layout.

2. Foundations: Granite foundation walls

3. Wall construction: Bearing wall, brick 1'-6" thick; brick of local manufacture and hauled by oxen across frozen Damariscotta Lake, winter of 1807.

4. Tower, stoops: Brick tower and steps.

5. Chimneys: One at rear appendage, of brick.

6. Openings:

a. Doorways: Arched-door entry, wood fan

b. Windows and shutters: Arched windows, original shutters removed, original sash replaced by stained glass. Louvered arched openings in tower. Circular stained glass window in brick tower. Semicircular window between sanctuary and tower.

7. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice: Wood cornice.

c. Tower: Wood shingle steeple on brick tower at entrance.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Brick tower at the entry. Sanctuary with central aisle. Sacristy-appendage at the rear.
2. Stairways: One to balcony or gallery. Stair of no interest.
3. Flooring: Wood plank floor, covered with asphalt tile at the aisle. Wall to wall carpet at altar.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster; ceiling and walls painted.
5. Doors: Doors to robing room, six-panel wood doors, heavy wood cornice.
6. Trim: Wood altar in the shape of a sarcophagus.
7. Heating: Modern oil fired hot air system.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: Church faces southeast, surrounded by graveyard.
2. Driveways and walks: Asphalt driveways and walks.
3. Enclosures: Iron pipe fence surrounds graveyard.

Prepared by F. Blair Reeves, Architect
National Park Service
July 1960.

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